

## WEEDS AND WHEAT

WHAT EXACTLY IS A WEED? THE DICTIONARY DEFINES IT AS “A *WILD PLANT GROWING WHERE IT IS NOT WANTED AND IN COMPETITION WITH CULTIVATED PLANTS.*” IN OTHER WORDS, SOMETHING YOU DON’T WANT GROWING WHERE YOU DON’T WANT IT TO GROW, THREATENING THE HEALTH OF SOMETHING YOU DO WANT TO GROW.

I KNOW A LOT ABOUT WEEDS. I SPENT A GOOD PORTION OF MY YOUTH WAGING WAR ON THEM. I GREW UP IN SOUTHWEST MISSOURI RIGHT BETWEEN THE OZARK MOUNTAINS AND THE GREAT PLAINS. IT WAS VERY POOR FARMING COUNTRY: THE SOIL WAS HARD AND MOSTLY CLAY, THE SUMMERS WERE HOT AND DROUGHTS WERE COMMON. BUT THAT DIDN’T BOTHER THE WEEDS. THEY LOVED IT. ESPECIALLY THE DANDELIONS. WE HAD ABOUT SEVEN ACRES OF LAND AND I THINK SIX OF THEM WERE DANDELIONS.

MY DAD HAD DECLARED WAR ON DANDELIONS AND MY OLDER BROTHER AND I WERE THE TROOPS HE SENT INTO BATTLE. WE TRIED EVERYTHING WE COULD COME UP WITH TO GET RID OF THEM—WE DUG THEM OUT BY HAND, WE SPRAYED THEM WITH WEEDKILLER, WE EVEN TRED TO BURN THEM OUT WITH A SMALL FLAMETHROWER MY FATHER BOUGHT. BUT NOTHING WORKED. YOU COULD HAVE POURED SULFURIC ACID ON THOSE THINGS AND TWO WEEKS LATER THEY’D BE BACK. TALK ABOUT A MISSPENT YOUTH. AT MY LAST HIGHSCHOOL REUNION I DROPPED BY OUR OLD HOUSE AND GUESS WHAT? THE DANDELIONS ARE STILL THERE.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED FROM THIS? THAT’S EASY: DON’T WORRY ABOUT WEEDS. I CAN EVEN CITE BIBLICAL AUTHORITY FOR THAT BECAUSE IN TODAY’S GOSPEL LESSON JESUS SAYS NOT TO WORRY ABOUT THE WEEDS. LISTEN ONCE AGAIN TO JESUS’ STORY ABOUT WEEDS AND WHEAT.

### **Matthew 13:24-30 The Parable of the Weeds**

<sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. <sup>27</sup> “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup> “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ <sup>29</sup> “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”...

THEN JESUS EXPLAINS WHAT THE PARABLE MEANS: THE ONE WHO SOWED THE WHEAT IS JESUS, THE FIELD IS THE WORLD, THE WHEAT IS GOD’S CHILDREN, THE WEEDS ARE THEIR ENEMIES, AND THE ONE WHO SOWS THEM IS THE DEVIL. THE HARVEST IS THE END OF THE AGE AND THE HARVESTERS ARE ANGELS. WHEN THAT TIME COMES, JESUS WILL SEND HIS ANGELS TO COLLECT ALL THE ENEMIES OF HIS

CHILDREN AND THROW THEM INTO THE FIERY FURNACE ALONG WITH THEIR LEADER. BUT HIS CHILDREN WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

WEEDS ARE A GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S CHILDREN GO ABOUT THEIR WORK. THEY SEEM TO COME FROM NOWHERE AND THEY WON'T GO AWAY. THEY'RE UGLY AND USELESS, BUT THEY'RE ALSO TOUGH AND PERSISTENT. THEIR ROOTS GO DEEP AND THE WORSE THE SOIL IS THE MORE THEY LIKE IT. THEY THRIVE IN PLACES WHERE NO FRUITFUL PLANT CAN LIVE. THEY WASTE THE GROUND THEY GROW IN AND THEY SAP THE STRENGTH OF THE FRUITFUL PLANTS AROUND THEM. THEY GROW EVERYWHERE—IN SWAMPS, PRAIRIES, DESERTS, JUNKYARDS, LANDFILLS AND, OF COURSE, YOUR LAWN.

**[STORY OF PIG MANURE AND TOMATO PLANTS:]** WEEDS CAN GROW *ANYWHERE*.

IN THIS PARABLE JESUS UNMASKS THE WORK OF SATAN. LIKE WEEDS THAT INVADE A GARDEN AND DRAW STRENGTH FROM FRUITFUL PLANTS. SATAN SCATTERS ENEMIES OF GOD'S CHILDREN AMONG THEM TO DISCOURAGE THEM. LIKE WEEDS THESE ENEMIES ARE TOUGH AND PERSISTENT AND THEIR ROOTS GO DEEP BECAUSE THEY ARE AT HOME IN THE HARD AND ROCKY SOIL OF A FALLEN WORLD. TO MAKE IT WORSE HE MAKES THEM PROSPER WHILE GOD'S CHILDREN OFTEN SUFFER.

AND WE WONDER WHY? WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER AND THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER? THAT QUESTION HAS TORMENTED BELIEVERS EVER SINCE THE TIME OF JOB. AND LIKE JOB'S WORTHLESS FRIENDS WHO ASSAULTED HIM WITH WORTHLESS QUESTIONS, THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S CHILDREN LIKE TO DO THE SAME. *"DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE STILL BUYING THAT GOBBLEDEGOOP ABOUT PIE IN THE SKY WHEN YOU DIE? WHERE IS GOD WHEN YOU NEED HIM?"* OR TRAGEDY STRIKES AND THEY SAY, *"WHAT KIND OF GOD WOULD ALLOW THAT TO HAPPEN?"*

AND THESE TAUNTS STING AND HURT AND EVEN RAISE DOUBTS IN OUR MIND BECAUSE IT SEEMS LIKE THE WEEDS ARE WINNING AND WE ARE LOSING. THAT'S WHY THE DEVIL SOWS THEM ALL AROUND US. HE WANTS US TO SEE THEM PROSPER IN CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LAY US LOW. HE WANTS US TO WATCH IN AMAZEMENT AS THEY SPROUT UP AGAIN AND AGAIN AND NOTHING SEEMS TO KEEP THEM DOWN. HE WANTS US TO ENVY THEIR PROSPERITY AND RESENT OUR LOWLINESS. HE WANTS TO DESTROY THE JOY WE HAVE IN OUR SALVATION AND REPLACE IT WITH CRAVING FOR WHAT THE WORLD HAS TO OFFER.

AND SOMETIMES WE'RE TEMPTED TO DO IT—TO IMITATE THE WEEDS. TO GO NATIVE AND GET COMFORTABLE WITH THIS WORLD RATHER THAN CONTINUING TO LIVE AS ALIENS AND STRANGERS IN IT. THERE IS A COST TO DISCIPLESHIP AND SOMETIMES THE COST SEEMS TOO HIGH. MAYBE THE WEEDS HAVE IT RIGHT AFTER ALL.

AGAINST THIS TEMPTATION THE LORD GIVES US TWO WARNINGS AND TWO PROMISES. THE FIRST WARNING IS: DON'T GET CHUMMY WITH THE WEEDS. DON'T MAKE THE ROCKY, HARD SOIL OF THIS WORLD YOUR HOME. DON'T FORFEIT THE GLORY THAT AWAITS YOU FOR THE CHEAP THRILLS THAT BECKON YOU NOW. YOU'RE NOT A WEED. DON'T ACT LIKE ONE. THAT'S THE FIRST WARNING. THE SECOND WARNING IS: DON'T TRY TO GET RID OF THE WEEDS. YOU'LL BE FALLING INTO A TRAP. JUST LIKE THE WHEAT IS CLOSE TO THE WEEDS, THERE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO ARE CLOSE TO

GOD'S ENEMIES. THEY MAY BE GOOD FRIENDS, THEY MAY EVEN BE IN THE SAME FAMILY. IF YOU ATTACK OR SHUN THOSE ENEMIES, YOU MAY OFFEND THE CHILDREN OF GOD WHO ARE CLOSE TO THEM AND INJURE—OR EVEN DESTROY—THEIR FAITH.

WE'RE CALLED TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THEM—NOT SHUN THEM. DON'T FORGET: GOD WANTS ALL PEOPLE TO BE SAVED—INCLUDING OUR ENEMIES. LIKE THE WEEDS, OUR ENEMIES ARE IN GOD'S HANDS; HE IS THE ONE WHO SAVES AND HE IS THE ONE WHO CONDEMNS. THOSE ARE THE WARNINGS. AND WHAT ARE GOD'S TWO PROMISES TO US?

THE FIRST PROMISE IS THAT WHAT AWAITS US IN THE NEXT WORLD SURPASSES THE SUFFERING WE PUT UP WITH IN THIS WORLD AS FAR AS THE HEAVENS SURPASS THE EARTH. PAUL WRITES: *"I DO NOT CONSIDER THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PRESENT AGE WORTHY OF BEING COMPARED TO THE TO THE GLORY THAT AWAITS US."* AND, *"...OUR LIGHT AND MOMENTARY TROUBLES ARE ACHIEVING FOR US AN ETERNAL GLORY THAT FAR OUTWEIGHS THEM ALL."* AND, *"NO EYE HAS SEEN, NO EAR HAS HEARD, NO MIND HAS CONCEIVED WHAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."* SUCH ARE THE BLESSINGS THAT AWAIT US.

GOD'S SECOND PROMISE TO THE BELIEVER HAS TO DO WITH HIS LIFE IN THIS WORLD. AS A BELIEVER GROWS IN HIS FAITH GOD IS WORKING IN HIM TO MAKE HIM MORE AND MORE CHRISTLIKE. PAUL WROTE: *"FOR THOSE HE CALLED HE PREDESTINED TO BE CONFORMED TO THE LIKENESS OF HIS SON SO THAT HE WOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN OF MANY BROTHERS."*

THROUGH PRAYER, WORSHIP, GOD'S WORD, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS CHILDREN, THE CHILD OF GOD IS DRAWN CLOSER AND CLOSER TO HIS FATHER IN HEAVEN AND BEGINS TO KNOW THE PEACE THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING. AS HE LEARNS TO LOVE GOD MORE AND MORE, HE LEARNS TO LOVE HIS NEIGHBOR MORE AND MORE. HE FINDS THAT THE YOKE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE IS EASY AND THE BURDEN IS LIGHT. FINALLY, THROUGH THE FAITHFUL LIVING OF A CHRISTIAN LIFE HE DRAWS OTHER PEOPLE TO CHRIST. GOD SHINES HIS LIGHT THROUGH HIS CHILDREN AND PEOPLE ARE DRAWN TO THAT LIGHT.

SO LET THE WEEDS ALONE; LET THEM FLOURISH IN THEIR OWN TIME, HOWEVER OFFENSIVE THEY MAY BE. LET THEM SERVE TO REMIND YOU OF THE DECEITFULNESS OF A WORLD OF SMOKE AND MIRRORS. THE DEVIL IS THE CLEVEREST CON MAN OF THEM ALL AND HE APPEARS TO US AS AN ANGEL OF LIGHT TO PRACTICE HIS WILES. HE SAYS: *"CONSIDER THE PROSPERITY OF MY PEOPLE, THE WEEDS. THEY OUTPERFORM YOU AT EVERY TURN. THEY THRIVE AS YOU SUFFER, THEY GROW WHILE YOU WITHER AND THEY WILL BE HERE LONG AFTER YOU ARE GONE."*

BUT HE IS A LIAR! THE WEEDS LOOK STRONG AND HEALTHY NOW BUT THEY ARE ALL DESTINED FOR THE FIRE, WHILE THE CHILDREN OF GOD ARE DESTINED FOR ETERNAL JOYS. AFTER ALL, ONE OF THE LARGEST WEEDS I EVER SAW WAS GROWING IN A PAIL OF PIG MANURE.

THE DEVIL SAYS, "COME BE MY WEED!" OUR SAVIOR SAYS: *"COME TO ME YOU WHO ARE BLESSED BY MY FATHER; TAKE YOUR INHERITANCE, THE KINGDOM PREPARED FOR YOU SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD."*

SO WHEN IT APPEARS THAT UGLINESS AND INJUSTICE SEEM TO PREVAIL IN THIS VALE OF TEARS, KEEP IN MIND THAT *"AN ENEMY DID THIS."* HE IS FULL OF RAGE BECAUSE HE KNOWS HIS TIME IS SHORT AND HE IS BOUND AND DETERMINED TO TAKE AS MANY PEOPLE AS HE CAN ALONG WITH HIMSELF INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE. HE PLANTS HIS WEEDS TO DISCOURAGE YOU AND DECEIVE YOU, BUT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU AN UNASSAILABLE TRUTH THAT YOUR ENEMY CAN NEVER REFUTE:

THERE IS A LIFE BEYOND THIS ONE AND ALL THAT SEEMS MYSTERIOUS AND CONFUSING AND UNJUST TO US NOW WILL BE MADE CLEAR AND RIGHT THERE. AND WHEN WE SEE GOD FACE TO FACE, WE WILL THEN KNOW BY SIGHT WHAT WE NOW KNOW BY FAITH: THAT *"NO EYE HAS SEEN, NO EAR HAS HEARD, NO MIND HAS CONCEIVED WHAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."*

Amen.